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Why we print

The Christian Science Monitor today publishes a segment of the Pentagon papers.

It is a chapter, or episode, in the long story of the Vietnam war. Our chapter deals with a hitherto almost unknown phase of the story: a policy plan in July of 1962 to phase American forces out of Vietnam which was founded on a misreading of the real situation in Vietnam itself and which ended in a total reversal in March of 1964.

Before publishing we have carefully examined all of the material in our possession to make sure that there is no breach of national security and no danger to the welfare of any American or allied forces in Vietnam. We are satisfied that this material is of historical interest only, that not a word of it will be of any damage to the security and welfare of the United States. We are also satisfied that the publication of this material at this time is a constructive act which will help the American people and their government to a better knowledge of what went wrong and hence on to changes in the policymaking process in Washington, which clearly needs improving.

Also, it is the nature of governments to tell less than the whole truth to their people. Special pleading, unwatched and unchecked, leads to arbitrary government and deprives people of a chance to give or withhold their consent on the basis of full and balanced information. The proper role of a responsible press is to do its best at all times to tell those things which the public should know but governments would prefer to withhold.

Back in 1962 when our chapter of the study begins, the policymakers of Washington were cheerfully doing their planning on the assumption that Viet Cong insurgency in Vietnam would be overcome by the end of the year 1965. And that was a "conservative" estimate.

This happy assumption about the course of American involvement in Vietnam emerged from a meeting which began in Honolulu on July 23, 1962. Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara had gone there to hear various reports on the Vietnam war at the office of the U.S.

Commander in Chief of the Pacific (CINCPAC). At that conference the technicians and advisers to the commanding officer painted a very rosy picture indeed. At the end of it Mr. McNamara asked for an estimate of how long it would take to eliminate the Viet Cong. The reply, from COMUSMACV (Commander, U.S. Military Aid Group for Vietnam), "estimated one year from the time the RVNAF (Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces), the Civil Guard, and the Self-Defense Corps became fully operational and began to press the VC in all areas."

Mr. McNamara decided to play it safe and take a "conservative" view and work with a three- instead of a one-year estimate. And so the planning which began in mid-1962 and remained in effect until March of 1964 assumed that the American role in Vietnam would all be over by the end of 1965!

Yet by the end of 1965 American escalation was unrolling and the United States was on the way to putting half a million of its people into Vietnam.

How wrong can you be?

The Monitor's papers, and other segments from the same basic document, all seem to indicate that there are two remarkably accurate sources of intelligence information and appreciation in Washington. One is the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the other is an obscure and little known section of the State Department called the Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR).

Over and over through these papers both CIA and INR seem to get their facts and estimates in balance and perspective whereas Department of Defense Intelligence and Military Aid Group appraisals leave much to be desired.

Not often did they underestimate the problem as massively as in July of 1962. But the record is less than impressive. The policymakers were working all through 1962 and 1963 on information and judgments which were totally discredited by events. Clearly, CIA and INR were working in the right direction and the lesson, if any, is that policymakers should listen more to those sources and less to others.

Beyond the court ruling . . .

Data may refocus U.S. Viet policy

By Courtney R. Sheldon
Staff correspondent of
The Christian Science Monitor

Washington

The Nixon administration is almost certain to be uncomfortably on the defensive whether it wins or loses its historic battle with the news media in the Supreme Court.

The revelations thus far of the Pentagon secret papers raise leviathan moral questions on the origins of the Vietnam war.

They could critically impair the ability of President Nixon to resist pressures to speed up his paced withdrawal from Vietnam.

While the Supreme Court took more time on June 23 for a careful assessment of the rights and responsibilities of the press under the Constitution, it was apparent that:

- Any curb by the Supreme Court on further publication of the Vietnam war papers could heighten public suspicions that the full truth is being concealed.

- A decision in favor of the newspapers could result in disclosure of more government papers which link Mr. Nixon--the vice-president under President Eisenhower, from 1952 to 1960 and a pronounced hawk at the time--with the actions of his predecessors.

- Any decision of the Supreme Court will not erase the severe mutual distrust between the news media profession and Nixon officials.

On the right of newspapers under the Constitution to publish what they wish, without prior restraint, there is almost complete unanimity among the conservatives, moderates, and radicals in the profession.

Just what Mr. Nixon will do to try to unite the country after the court ruling is not clear. He has not held a press conference in a month. He could address the nation and restate or modify priorities in Southeast Asia.

The target of war critics now is likely to be Mr. Nixon's announced intention of keeping a residual force indefinitely in Vietnam, or until the prisoners of war are released by North Vietnam.

Writing in the July issue of Foreign Affairs, retired Gen. Matthew B. Ridgway concluded:

"So long as we retain a residual force there, if only to provide logistical supporting for the South Vietnamese Army, our men will be mortared, shelled or otherwise attacked; and that so long as they are at-fear of attacks from the hawks, including tacked they will counterattack with fire and movement, and the war will drag on, not end."

Ball observations

George W. Ball, undersecretary of state under Presidents Kennedy and Johnson, observed on CBS TV:

"I would say on the whole that I think the government is pulling out of Vietnam. I would hope they'll do it with an accelerated tempo . . . because it seems to me that there's been a full signal to the administration now that they haven't got a great deal more time to get American troops out of this situation without a real blowup in the United States."

Mr. Ball was among the very few who argued against escalation of the war from the start.

He now faults the Nixon administration for lack of full candor in handling the Cambodian and Laotian invasions, but he advised against seeking scapegoats in any administration.

Sen. Barry Goldwater (R) of Arizona, the Republican candidate against President Johnson in 1964, is again saying that it is Democrats who start wars and Republicans who wind them down.

Rostow interviewed

Everyone involved is anxious to keep the record straight from his standpoint. In an interview (recorded in March and just now released over National Educational Television), Walt W. Rostow, chairman of the State Department's Policy Planning Council in the Johnson administration, reported on President Eisenhower's advice to President Kennedy the day before the Kennedy inauguration.

Mr. Eisenhower warned Mr. Kennedy, according to Mr. Rostow, that the situation in Laos was approaching a disaster and that the U.S. and its allies in the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization might have to intervene directly. If the allies were unwilling, the U.S. would have to do the job alone. Mr. Eisenhower was quoted as urging.

The Pentagon papers for an earlier period show Mr. Eisenhower turning aside recommendations to involve U.S. military forces in Southeast Asia unless the allies joined in the effort.

Mr. Rostow and Gen. Maxwell D. Taylor, who was interviewed at the same time, emphasized the conviction of all governments, Republican or Democratic, that the prestige and leadership of the U.S. was threatened by Communist subversion.

As president since 1969, Mr. Nixon proceeds with a policy of deescalation, but he does not share the view of war critics that the war should never have been fought.

The Pentagon papers report several times that the Central Intelligence Agency rejected the thesis that the U.S. could not pull out without irreparably damaging U.S. world leadership.

The CIA also, according to government papers not in the Pentagon file and disclosed in the Chicago Sun Times, gave Mr. Nixon this same advice when he became president in 1969.

Further undermining Mr. Nixon's image publication of Pentagon papers in the Boston Globe showed it was a Johnson decision to emphasize the Vietnamization process in 1963.

In other words, the Nixon program of Vietnamization -- building up the Saigon government militarily and politically so it could stand on its own two feet -- had Democratic origins.

Gradually, the history of the period is being reconstructed. A release of the full Pentagon papers by court order will fill in some gaps. Others will remain indefinitely. The heavy loss of life without visible victory will make Vietnam an issue in U.S. politics long after the last U.S. soldier leaves Southeast Asia.

DODGE CITY, KANS.
GLOBE

E - 7,534

JUN 29 1971

No Bogey Man?

The Central Intelligence Agency, for a long time a chief bogey man to the Far Left, is emerging as more or less a "good guy" in the current revelations concerning the Vietnam War and how we ever got into that mess. In its estimates of the situation over there, it does not seem to have encouraged military adventurism.

Of course, the CIA men out in the field, when told to undertake various operations of an underground nature to help out in a war which was going on, did do things which had best be kept underground if we wish to feel comfortable about them. But when its advice was asked it counseled a moderate course, all too often without its advice being followed.

One tale surfacing last week says a CIA report advised Richard Nixon shortly after he came into power that he could pull all the U.S. troops out in the shortest possible time and no harm to the Allied cause would result from it, at least for some years and not necessarily then.

This we may read with some skepticism. It was not the general consensus of opinion at the time. In fact, some months later when Nixon unveiled his Vietnamiza-

tion plan it was denounced as unworkable most of all by these same critics now prepared to accept this other perhaps fictional earlier report as Gospel which President Nixon should have acted on the instant he heard it.

They don't believe it of course, even yet. They feel the South Vietnamese army, the Arvin, will crumble when the North Vietnamese put the crunch on them, without U.S. support; and some of these critics who loath the South Vietnamese government along with our involvement over there can scarcely disguise their pleasure at this prospect.

We have no trouble that way. As we have throughout this sad affair, we hope the Arvin will do well in combat and believe they will surprise many of their critics. It is our best way out of the mess, certainly.

The morality of this bothers us perhaps less than it should. But anything else is likely to wind up with the South Vietnamese overrun and perhaps hundreds of thousands of mostly innocent throats being cut--and the morality of allowing that to happen eludes us.

GRAND ISLAND, NEBR.
INDEPENDENT

E - 22,126

JUN 29 1971

A Page Devoted to

UNDERSTANDING

Editorially Speaking:

The Pentagon Papers (3)

You can argue all day about whether the executive branch of government (and the military) knows best about what the public should be told.

At this point in history, however, there seems little doubt that the American people were told just enough about Vietnam to build up support for what was an ever-widening involvement in Southeast Asia.

It was not the first time in our nation's history. The Spanish-American War might be a parallel, but one without the disastrous results of Vietnam.

But what about Congress? When it was being taken down the same path in 1964 and 1965, might wiser heads have prevailed had more facts been made known and a more realistic picture painted?

Gen. Maxwell Taylor, who moved from a job as chairman of the joint chiefs of staff to our ambassador in South Vietnam during the height of the buildup, referred to that question in the wake of the disclosures of the Pentagon Papers' contents.

"To my knowledge, this is the first time in history that a government's right to carry on some of its business outside the public eye has, in effect, been challenged," he said.

But he denied there had been any deception, adding, "One of the problems here is exactly what is meant. In the practice of foreign policy, a President owes a good deal to certain elements of Congress — the leadership — in the way of openness. But the President does not by any means owe that to all of Congress."

OK, we do have separation of the two branches of government and foreign policy is the obligation of the executive.

But there's a lot of difference between the "openness" to which Taylor refers and the way it is now apparent Congress was also misled in those earlier years.

In fact, it was on Aug. 8, 1964, that the House approved, 416-0, and the Senate, 88-2, a resolution which gave President Johnson authorization to take "all necessary measures . . . to repel any armed attack" against U.S. forces and "to prevent further aggression."

That became the vehicle under which the war was expanded.

At the time, only Sens. Wayne Morse and Ernest Gruening voted against the resolution.

Over the ensuing years, others began to speak out.

What might have happened, though, in 1964 and 1965 had at least Congressional leaders known of the opposition to our policies of CIA director John McCone?

Or, in 1965, if they'd have heard some testimony from George Ball, undersecretary of state, which reflected a July 1 memo which he sent to the President? From the viewpoint of 1971, what he wrote six years ago is almost uncanny:

"No one can assure you that we can beat the Viet Cong or even force them to the conference table on our terms," he said, "no matter how many hundred thousand white, foreign (U.S.) troops we deploy. Once we deploy substantial numbers of troops in combat, it will become a war between the U.S. and a large part of the population of South Viet Nam. U.S. troops will begin to take heavy casualties in a war they

are ill-equipped to fight in a non-cooperative if not downright hostile countryside. Once we suffer large casualties, we will have started a well-nigh irreversible process. Our involvement will be so great that we cannot — without national humiliation — stop short of achieving our objectives. I think humiliation would be more likely — even after we have paid terrible costs."

At the same time, however, that these misgivings were being expressed privately, all public pronouncements were exactly the opposite, and presumably private consultations with Congressional leaders were as optimistic as the public mouthings.

War fever, it would seem, was built up in part because there really wasn't any "openness" on the part of the executive — even with congressional leaders.

None of which is to criticize the motives of our leaders, however. They obviously did what they felt best. It just developed they were wrong.

LEWISTON, IDAHO
TRIBUNE

M - 21,770

S - 22,477

JUN 29 1971

A Vindication For The CIA

At least one part of the government should welcome the publication of the Pentagon papers. That is the Central Intelligence Agency, whose judgments of the military situation in North Vietnam and of the nature of the struggle in South Vietnam prior to 1965 have been vindicated by the Pentagon's documents.

These papers show that the CIA, under its director, John J. McCone, was reporting accurately on diplomatic and military developments in Southeast Asia but that its reports were being either ignored, overlooked, or misinterpreted in the highest councils of the government in Washington. For example, the Johnson administration continued to describe the insurgency in South Vietnam as essentially the work of the North Vietnamese government long after the CIA had reported that it actually was an indigenous movement among the peasants of South Vietnam. President Johnson and Secretary of State Dean Rusk were describing the Viet Cong as a virtual vassal of Hanoi after the CIA had reported that it was mainly home-grown and representative of a large part of the South Vietnamese population.

The reports of the Central Intelligence Agency indicated that the conflict in South Vietnam was essentially an in-country uprising. The Johnson administration based its policy on the assumption that it was essentially an aggressive move against the government of South Vietnam by the government of North Vietnam. This is a crucial difference because if the CIA

was right -- and subsequent events show that it was -- then the Kennedy and Johnson administrations were basing their whole Southeast Asia policy on the wrong assumption.

After the spring of 1965, American commanders in Saigon, together with the American ambassador there, fairly glowed with optimism in their public statements and their briefings for congressmen even though it was known in the Pentagon that the military situation was bad and getting worse. Events continued to prove the commanders wrong and the war refused to go the way the Joint Chiefs of Staff kept saying it would go. To the public, which knew only what it read in the papers, the reason just about had to be faulty intelligence, and the prestige of the CIA fell sharply.

The Pentagon papers have revealed that the optimism of the generals and the administration did not reflect the judgments of the CIA after all and that the developments of the war which seemed always to take the Pentagon and the White House by surprise were being rather accurately predicted by the CIA.

The CIA took a frightful public drubbing after the failure in 1961 of the invasion of the Bay of Pigs, which appeared to have resulted from bad intelligence. In the light of what later happened in Vietnam, it would be interesting to see the record of the CIA's reports at that time. It is now possible to suspect that the CIA accurately predicted what would happen and that the generals simply refused to be deterred. -- L.H.

SEATTLE, WASH.
TIMES

JUN 29 1971
E - 244,776
S - 310,357

McNamara dispute with military revealed

Knight Newspapers, Inc.

WASHINGTON — Barely a year after the sustained United States bombing of North Vietnam began, Defense Secretary Robert McNamara had lost faith that it would achieve its objectives. The Pentagon analyst who wrote a study entitled "The Air War in North Vietnam" said it was "a colossal misjudgment" to think that the bombing would pressure Hanoi into calling it quits.

Previously published portions of the Pentagon papers revealed the planning that led up to the opening of the bombing campaign — code-named Operation Rolling Thunder — in March, 1965.

NEW DOCUMENTS made available to Knight Newspapers trace in great detail McNamara's growing disillusionment with the policy he had recommended.

By the summer of 1966, a ferocious struggle had developed within the councils of government over the bombing.

The struggle pitted McNamara and many of his civilian advisers, often supported by the C. I. A., against the generals and admirals in the war zone and on the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

The military leaders consistently recommended more and heavier bombing, the documents show. Towards the end, in 1968, the chiefs, while conceding that the air

raids had been ineffective, blamed it on political constraints that had prevented them from attacking key targets.

JUST THREE WEEKS before President Lyndon Johnson ordered a partial bombing halt and announced he would not seek re-election, on March 31, 1968, a memorandum from the Joint Chiefs sought permission to attack Hanoi and the Port of Haiphong.

McNamara, on the other hand, had been resisting the escalation of Rolling Thunder for nearly two years before the bombing halt, the report shows.

In January, 1965, when he first recommended Rolling Thunder to President Johnson, McNamara thought it would not have to last more than six months.

In July, 1965, realizing that the bombing was falling short of its goals, McNamara urged that the raids be stepped up and expanded to cover most of Vietnam.

But after an inspection trip to Vietnam in October, 1966, he recommended a leveling off of the United States effort and an effort to find a diplomatic solution.

Instead of escalating the bombing, McNamara suggested a barrier of fences, mines and troops across the northern border of South Vietnam and the Ho Chi Minh Trail through Laos.

In addition, he recommended a reduction or pause in the bombing in an effort to get peace negotiations started.

THE MILITARY leaders argued strongly against McNamara's approach. A sharp dissenting memorandum signed by Gen. Earle Wheeler, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said the chiefs "do not concur in your recommendation that there should be no increase in level of bombing effort or that, as a carrot to induce negotiations, we should suspend or reduce our bombing campaign against North Vietnam...

McNamara won that round and the bombing was not escalated that fall. The struggle was resumed early in 1967. However, the President eventually yielded to military pressure to intensify Rolling Thunder and in June authorized a "selected intensification of the air war."